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Socialism in England

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Socialism and its Practical Aims in England

A LECTURE DELIVERED BEFORE THE

SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

At Saratoga Springs, Sept. 6, 1889,

And with a Few Modifications and Additions, at

THE CHICAGO ECONOMIC CONFERENCE

DEC. 22, 1889

BY

PERCIVAL CHUBB

MEMBER OF THE FABIAN SOCIETY, LONDON, ENG.

ON SALE AT

THE OFFICE OF "THE DAWN," 36 BROMFIELD ST., BOSTON, MASS.

Price 10 cents, post free

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THIS lecture is issued in pamphlet form, to meet the wishes of some people who heard it in Chicago. Those who are familiar with English Socialism will, I suspect, find little or nothing in it that is new. Those to whom the subject is fresh need to be warned that my very brief presentation of it necessarily leaves many important items and aspects of Socialist doctrine untouched. They should also bear in mind that I have often been obliged to be curtly dogmatic in my statements where I should have preferred to be argumentative.

There is one aspect of Socialism—the moral aspect—upon which I have been able to say little in my lecture. If it were possible to treat this with brevity, I should be induced to write a few supplementary pages upon it. But the issues are too wide and too numerous. A satisfactory treatment of the question would have to include a consideration of the relation of economic reform to moral reform,—the relation, that is, of the forces of character and of circumstances; of the relation of the individual to society and the State; of the moral value of competition and the distinction between individualism and individuality; of the moral basis of property; of the moral criterion of work and its claims to reward. As I cannot deal with these questions here, I content myself with remarking that it is fully recognized that these are the vital issues of Socialism; and that, if Socialism is regarded as a mere gospel of economic proprieties, its scope and significance are misunderstood.

The forces behind the Socialist movement in England and throughout Europe are not only the forces of poverty and of a deeper sympathy with poverty, but the forces of a democratic revolt against class distinctions and class domination; of a growing aspiration among the people for larger opportunities of growth; of reaction against the vulgar materialism which has flooded our civilization, against the degradation of the arts, and the commercial spoliation of natural beauty and the comeliness of town surroundings.

This century has witnessed the rise of the English and European “middle class” into affluence and power. The “working class” now demands its wider chances, and many of the “middle class” have come forward to assist in urging this claim and in abolishing class distinctions forever. And why? First of all because justice and honor and humanity call upon them; but also because they see that the emancipation of the worker is the condition of the emancipation of civilization from the bonds of moral, intellectual, artistic, and literary debasement. Our ruling inequalities of condition and opportunity, and the greedy struggle for riches by which they are maintained, must be got rid of, if we are to build up a worthy and admirable civilization.

Socialism, then, makes its appeal to all sorts and conditions of men and women. It is not a doctrine of levelling down, but of levelling up,—a levelling up of the rich as well as the poor to a plane of juster and nobler living.

Those who desire a fuller account of the Socialist movement in England are recommended to consult the pamphlet entitled “Socialism in England,” by Sidney Webb, included among the publications of the American Economic Association.

P. C.

New York, February, 1890.

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SOCIALISM AND ITS PRACTICAL AIMS IN ENGLAND.

In spite of all the fashionable writing and talking about Socialism, such false and imperfect notions of what it means are still at large, that I shall venture to preface what I have to say about the practical aims of its English advocates by a short exposition of its theory and purpose.

Socialism professes to find a clew to, and a cure for, the poverty which is almost everywhere the distressing accompaniment of modern civilization. It is but a few years back that Christendom, relying on that misunderstood saying of its founder, "The poor ye have always with you," accepted poverty as a divine necessity,—a discipline for the poor and a field of charity for the rich. Even now it is quite commonly believed that poverty, while it may be mitigated, and perhaps effectually relieved, by organized charity,—*i.e.*, charity officialized and administered with a minimum of compassion,—can never be wholly abolished. But society has from time to time been startled out of its complacent toleration of poverty by reformers who preached a seeming way of escape from it; and now Socialism, professing to base itself on science and history, affirms that poverty is a perfectly explicable disease of the social body, a disease which has its chief cause in irrational and iniquitous social laws and institutions, and is to be cured through the application of a modicum of justice, reason, and good-will to the diseased body.

That this conclusion has not sooner been arrived at must be ascribed to men's ignorance of the real condition of things. No reasonable person can face the array of statistics now available as to the facts of social life without coming to the conclusion that there is some fundamental flaw in our social system. He can hardly study those statistics thoroughly and disinterestedly without gaining some insight into the causes of the evils, and the direction in which a remedy must be sought.

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Let us look for a moment at a few of the more salient facts which recent inquiry has brought to light. They shall be facts of the life of London, where I myself have lived :—

One out of four of the whole population is computed to be earning—and that irregularly—not more than a guinea a week *per family*; and over a third of these are receiving much less, and, says Mr. Booth, “live in a state of chronic want” (p. 33 of “Life and Labor in East London”). This corresponds to the proportion indicated by the statistics of mortality. In London one person in every five will die in the workhouse, hospital, or lunatic asylum. In 1887, out of 82,545 deaths in London, 43,507 being over twenty, 9,399 were in workhouses, 7,201 in hospitals, and 400 in lunatic asylums, or altogether 17,000 in public institutions (Registrar-General’s Report, 1888, C.—5, 138, pp. 2 and 73). Considering that comparatively few of these are children, it is probable that one in every three London adults will be driven into these refuges to die; and the proportion in the case of the manual labor class must, of course, be much greater. One in eleven of the whole metropolitan population is driven to accept Poor Law relief during any one year (see p. 20), and that notwithstanding the existence of organized metropolitan charities estimated to disburse over £4,000,000 annually (Encyclopædia Britannica, vol. xiv. p. 833), and that in Middlesex and Surrey there were in 1888 1,152,189 Post-office Savings Bank accounts open, with an aggregate balance of £15,410,541 (H.C. 177 of 1889). In spite of all, 29 deaths were referred, in 1888, to direct and obvious starvation (H.C. Return, No. 136, 1889).*

It has been found that “the average age at death among the nobility, gentry, and professional classes in England and Wales was 55 years; but among the artisan class of Lambeth it only amounted to 29 years; and, while the infantile death-rate among the well-to-do classes was such that only 8 children died in the first year of life, out of 100 born, as many as 30 per cent. succumbed at that age among the children of the poor in some districts of our large cities.” It has been computed that from thirty to thirty-five thousand children often go daily to school without breakfast, not to speak of those who have been only scantily fed. On an average, from twenty to twenty-five thousand dock laborers compete, which means physically struggle, for employment at the dock gates for work at 4*d.* (8 cents) per hour,† and that one-third of them struggle in vain. These facts clearly show

* From “Facts for Londoners,” an exhaustive collection of statistical and other facts relating to the metropolis, published by the Fabian Society, 63 Fleet Street, London. Price 6*d.*

† This was written before the great strike had secured an advance in the rate of pay, which is still shamefully low.

that our social system — if such a chaos of competition can be called a system — excludes a large fraction of the population from the opportunities of earning a livelihood altogether, and compels another large fraction to work at mere starvation wages; that it shortens the life of this large fraction, and sends them to die in workhouses and hospitals; half starves, and often more than half starves, their children, so that they are incapable of receiving even an elementary education.

What is the explanation of this lack of employment, this low rate of payment, this murderous poverty, breeding disease, suffering, and crime? We get a little light thrown on the question when we reflect upon another leading fact of our social life; namely, that out of the total annual income of the English nation, estimated at £1250 millions, 450 millions (more than a third) go in rent and interest to the owners of land and capital. This is as much as the whole income of the manual laborers of the country, although these represent about five-sevenths of the population. It appears, then, that out of the total annual income a small class are able by some means or other to appropriate more than a third. How do they manage to do it? The appropriation, I have said, is made in the form of rent and interest. Rent is payment to the owners of land for the use of that land. Interest is payment to the owners of capital for the use of that capital. These two things, land and capital, being absolutely necessary to life and comfort, the small minority who monopolize them can, and do, extort a toll from the non-possessing majority for their use. These proletarians, competing with one another for places, under the fear of starvation, are driven to accept the lowest possible wages, and their productions are sold for the highest obtainable price.

Here, then, says Socialism, is the economic root of the evil of poverty,—the monopoly by a small class of the means of life; namely, the material and the instruments essential to the production of wealth. This carries with it three great injustices: the exaction, from those who labor to produce wealth, of part of the fruits of their exertion (more than one-third, as I have said); the exclusion of many from opportunities of working; and the existence of an idle, rich, luxurious class. It implies, too, a great class antagonism, due to the effort of the monopolists to extract all they can from the disinherited; to take every advantage of the latter's disadvantages, so intensifying the struggle for daily bread.

There are other evils inseparable from these, other inequalities generated by this fundamental inequality, which are further proofs of its vicious character ; but I must not stop to speak of these now.

The economic cure which Socialism prescribes is the abolition of this monopoly of land and capital by vesting them in the nation, to be used for the public good instead of for private gain, and the consequent appropriation of rent and interest by the people for public instead of private enjoyment. This necessarily involves the organization of industry by the State ; the systematized co-operative production of the necessities of life to meet ascertained needs, avoiding waste and disastrous crises ; the enrolment of every capable citizen as a worker, abolishing idleness on the one hand and long and laborious toil on the other ; and the just distribution among the workers of the fruits of their exertion.

The strength of the position thus taken by Socialism lies in the fact that it advocates a solution for which the present economic development of society is preparing the way, and indeed will in time render inevitable. Industry is becoming more and more concentrated in large establishments, which are exterminating their smaller antagonists. Through the perfection of machinery and more minute division of labor, production is becoming more and more socialized,—a co-operation of workers constantly increasing in magnitude and complexity. And again, through the combination of productive concerns in trusts and syndicates, the distributive machinery is becoming more and more adequate to the needs of consumption. In time, it certainly must become clear that it is just and expedient that these productive concerns should be worked for the public good instead of for private aggrandizement. The transfer from private to public hands is being made easier every day.

So much, in brief, for the economic meaning of Socialism. Politically, it means the realization of a true democracy based on complete civil equality, “a government of the people, by the people, for the people,” to use an admirable historic phrase. It does not contemplate a huge, highly centralized organization of society, but such a confederation of free autonomous communities as will allow for the fullest mutual development of individuality in communal and personal life.

Ethically considered, Socialism is the effort to give effect to the principles of social morality, theoretically acknowledged by every professed follower of Jesus of Nazareth, that we should love our

neighbor as ourselves, and do unto others as we would that they should do unto us ; that the strong should bear the infirmities of the weak (and not strive to profit by these infirmities, which is the law of competition); and that the measure of human worth is service, and not possessions. The basis of Socialist ethics is none other than the principle implied in the Golden Rule and stated in another form by Paul, that we are members one of another, so that an injury or injustice done to one is an injury or injustice done to the whole. Socialism affirms, along with the great teachers of all time, that the good of the individual is conditioned by and involved in the good of the society of which he is a member ; and therefore that, in order that society may secure the highest good to the individuals composing it, each individual must live for the highest good of society. In this principle, it gains at once the guide of conduct and the inspiration of life. Living by it, a man finds himself lifted above the narrow limits of his private concerns, to share in the larger life and wider interests of humanity. From this standpoint, the struggle for personal possessions seems paltry and foolish, and only that common good, which is a brotherly co-operation for living a full and deep and beneficent life, worthy of pursuit.

Now, Socialism as a principle of social reconstruction and an ideal of social progress must be the same for all peoples ; but it is clear that, as the political and social conditions of nations vary considerably, they cannot realize the ideal by identical methods of transition. This, at least, is the opinion to which most Socialists in England have been won. In the early stages of the movement it was believed with a fanatical ardor that the change from the old to the new social order might be effected by a sudden and simultaneous uprising of the workers of all the nations. This belief still survives, more especially on the continent of Europe. In England, the view now rather prevails that, while the rich may force the poor to revolutionary measures, the chief obstacle to the adoption of Socialism is not, as it is on the continent, the oppression of a despotic power, which forbids free speech and propaganda, but the ignorance, prejudice, and inertia of the people. True, these are sad shortcomings, for which the inhumanity of society must be blamed ; but they are facts which must be faced frankly. The conviction is also gaining ground that to make such a vast change as that from the *régime* of competition, class distinction, and individualism in morals to the *régime* of co-opera-

tion, equality, and social ethics, suddenly, is a moral and an economic impossibility; and that the effort to do so would be made in the face of the teaching of history and philosophy. English Socialists, or the great majority of them, have therefore taken to formulating a scheme of transitional measures, designed to lead as speedily as possible to the consummation of their aims, the foundation of a co-operative commonwealth. They have, accordingly, while continuing their purely educational work, entered the sphere of political action with the object of forcing their own stepping-stone measures. Such success has attended their early efforts that there can be little doubt that it is along these lines that the Socialist movement will advance in the future.

It would, however, be unfair to ignore the significance and influence of the comparatively small body of avowedly revolutionary Socialists who discountenance and hold aloof from the endeavor to gain Socialism by instalments through political agencies. This section of believers in the possibility of a sudden transformation still hopes to educate and organize the proletariat of Europe for a great revolt. It derives much of its present importance from the fact that it is headed by a man of genius in the person of William Morris,—poet, artist, and agitator,—who has nobly dedicated his splendid gifts to the cause of Socialism. Allied to this section is one wing of the Anarchist party in England, which also gains a weight disproportionate to the small number of its adherents from its having as chief spokesman that self-sacrificing and learned Russian, Peter Krapotkine. These men, and others of kindred temperament, are really the idealists of the Socialist movement. They are consequently an invaluable element in it. It is they who help to keep it from falling away from its finer faith and higher purpose, and from losing itself in the machinery of politics and the animosities of party strife. As it seems to be the inevitable tendency of political parties to run into the mire of intrigue, mean artifice, and unworthy compromise, an influence which will aid Socialism in its political activity to preserve a pure heart and clean hands is an influence to be thankful for.

Having cleared the ground somewhat by explaining the theory of Socialism and the political attitude of its English advocates, I may now proceed to expound their practical programme. For clearness' sake, I will venture to state again in succinct form the economic aim of Socialism: it is to substitute for the present *régime* of competitive industry for private profit, based on the

private ownership of land and capital, a *régime* of co-operative industry for the public benefit, based on the State ownership and administration of land and capital (*not*, be it observed, of all private property). This, as I have already remarked, means the appropriation for public purposes of the rent and interest paid for the use of land and capital, which now finds its way into private purses. It follows that, if the whole of this rent and interest were diverted by taxation into the public purse, there would be no further reason for the private direction of industry. So that the final result aimed at by Socialism will be equally effected by these two convergent methods,—*i.e.*, the gradual assumption of industrial functions by the State, and the gradual public appropriation by taxation of rent and interest. But these do not exhaust the methods of Socialism. Not only will it work for the gradual State, municipal, and township organization of labor, but also for the most rigorous State control of private industry and enterprise for the protection of the worker in his unequal struggle with capital, and in the interests of the public weal. This is at once just, and is needed to place the worker in that position of efficiency and independence which is a condition of his well-being and of political and social advance. This is the direction in which legislation has done most for Socialism in the past; and, as continuing a well-established precedent, it is this class of legislative interference which, though it is not most important, should stand first in the category of Socialist methods. Lastly, with the same end of advancing the interests of the workers,—who are, let it be remembered, the overwhelming majority of the nation,—Socialism will strive for the improvement in all possible ways of the condition and opportunities of the people: by their better housing, by providing against want during compulsory idleness (by affording work), during sickness, and in old age, and by the multiplication of the chances of education and healthy recreation.

Here let me forestall two objections often made against the Socialist position. The first refers to the debilitating effect of State interference and State management. Nothing could be more alien to the democratic object and spirit of Socialism than the paternalism so often ascribed to it. Socialism does not propose that anything should be done by a power outside or above the people. By the State, it means the people in their corporate capacity; and, by State action or State control, it means action by the people and control by the people of their own affairs, in-

stead of such control and action by a despot, a cabinet, or a class. (The ascendancy of the majority is of course inevitable: there can be no State and no industrial organization without it.) It is the endeavor of Socialism to generate in every man a sense of his representative character and of his civic obligations and privileges.

The second objection I wish to notice is that Socialism is unjust in taking from the rich to benefit the poor; is, in fact, a form of charity,—compulsory charity. This is an objection which will be seen to be irrelevant, if what I have already said has been understood. In the view of Socialism, the taxation of land and capital, by which the State revenues for the accomplishment of its designs are to be raised, is simply a means of restoring for public uses the rent and interest which are unjustly withheld from the people and should be employed for public purposes. It is important to bear this in mind.

I have sketched the four kinds of legislative reform by which Socialism in England hopes to work out its ends. They are, to enumerate them briefly for convenience' sake:—

1. The control of private industry and enterprise.
2. The gradual absorption of industry by the State.
3. The progressive taxation of rent and interest (*i.e.*, of land and large incomes).
4. The improvement of the conditions and opportunities of the people.

The first point to be noticed in connection with these legislative aims is that in advocating them Socialists are advocating nothing new, and are not proposing to initiate any novel departure in politics. The strength of the position assumed by Socialism in this matter lies in the fact that it is working along the lines of development which politics have taken ever since the beginning of the century,—taken, not in obedience to any well-defined theory such as Socialism claims to be, but often in actual contradiction to the dominant theory, simply because there was practically no other way of coping with the evils of the time. Socialism, as you will have gathered, aims to carry the extension of legislation along these lines so far as to alter the economic basis of social life. Its affirmation is that the need of such legislation in the past is a proof that the economic or property basis of our social *régime* is unscientific and mischievous. The assumption of the champions of *laissez-faire* was that competition, with the private ownership of land and capital, would find its own adjustments, and that the

self-interest on which it was based would educe its own checks and insure social well-being. This assumption cannot stand the test of economic analysis. Early in the century, it was found that the State, unless it were to become a party to the wholesale degradation and even murder of men, women, and young children, could not "let alone," but had to put a stop—to be sure, even yet, a very partial stop—to the ruinous tyranny of competitive commerce. And we have accordingly had in England an extensive series of protective measures.

According to one school of reformers, of whom Mr. Henry George is the distinguished leader, the mischief is due entirely to the private ownership of land. These new individualists uphold the private ownership of capital and, with a few exceptions, free competition. But Socialism fails to see any valid and essential distinction between land (which often embodies a great deal of capital) and capital. It maintains that the monopoly of capital—which, equally with land, no single man made, and is, under modern conditions, as indispensable as land for human welfare—is also an inevitable source of human bondage. It affirms that it is unjust and illogical to tax the rent of land and leave untaxed interest on capital, which, like the rent of land, is a toll levied on labor by monopolists of what is largely a social product and is indispensable to life. In any case, it denies the right of any person, by any monopoly whatever, to withhold from labor any part of the fruits of its exertion and to live in idleness on interest, supported by the labor of others.

This, however, is a digression. I will now deal *seriatim* with each of the four species of legislation which I have enumerated, indicating briefly what progress has been made in each instance, and then stating the fresh extensions which, as Socialists believe, should be immediately demanded.

1. Under the head of legislation insuring the State control of private industry and enterprise for the protection of the workers and the public, we have first the series of Acts passed from 1802 onwards, which regulate the employment of men, women, and children in factories, workshops, and mines. Under this category are to be included several Acts passed in recent years (after the cessation of such legislation during a period when reactionary individualist doctrines held sway),—Acts like the Employer's Liability Act, protecting employees against accidents due to the negligence or fault of the employers; the Mines Regulation Acts, protecting

miners against accidents in mines and abuses of employers' powers; the Truck Act, providing for the honest payment of wages. Besides Acts of this kind, we have a series of Acts for the protection of public health, the chief of which is the Public Health Act, 1875, which consolidated previous legislation. By that Act and other minor incorporated Acts, provision is made, among other matters, for the regulation of the construction of new streets and buildings and of slaughter-houses, of common lodging-houses; the use of markets; the prohibition of practices dangerous to health, such as keeping animals near dwellings and offensive trades; the plying of hackney carriages and of pleasure boats and vessels, etc. Other Acts provide against adulteration and the unhealthy management of dairies, cowsheds, and milkshops. Then we have the Merchants' Shipping Act for the protection of seamen, and Acts for the control of electric lighting, telephones, railway rates, etc. By rigid inspection and registration, the State exercises in numerous instances controlling power of another kind. But more important than any of these controls is the power which, by Mr. Gladstone's famous Irish Land Acts, the State has assumed to control rents in Ireland,—a precedent that was not lost sight of when it came to dealing with the agrarian grievances of the crofters in the north of Scotland. This record will show that not a little has been done to curtail the power of capital in its unequal contest with labor, and to insist upon such an exercise of individual powers as shall not endanger public health, safety, and convenience.

The particular extension of State control for which the Socialists, together with other reformers, are pressing now, is the limitation of the working day to a maximum of eight hours. There is at present some difference of opinion as to the practicability of enforcing such a requirement in all cases. A modified proposal is to enforce it in all government and municipal establishments, in mines, and in all licensed monopolies (railways, tramways, gas-works, etc.), and in any trade in which the majority of workers demand it. Socialists know that, if the industry of a country were properly organized and every capable person shared the work of production and distribution, much less than eight hours' work per day would be required from each person. They regard eight hours as the maximum which any one ought to be required to work in order to earn a sufficient maintenance. Out of these eight hours, the wage-earner will, as a rule, be working at least two for the benefit of landlords and capitalists.

In addition to this, Socialists intend to agitate for legislation to secure at least one day's holiday per week (not necessarily Sunday) and abstention from work on fête days; the abolition of night work, as far as practicable, for men and women, and entirely for children; and the total suppression of labor by children below the age of fourteen, and protection of children up to the age of eighteen. These requirements were included in the Socialist programme at the recent Paris Congress.

Socialists recognize that much has yet to be done to benefit workers in shops, factories, and, above all, in mines; and further legislation for this purpose is almost certain to be carried very soon. These matters are being looked after by trades-unions and labor associations, and they will have all the help that Socialists can give. Radicals are already talking of the application of the Irish land acts to Wales, Scotland, and England; and it is in this direction, and not in the retrograde proposal to establish a peasant proprietary, that the line of advance to the Socialist goal lies.

2. The progress made in legislation of the kind mentioned in my second division — namely, legislation securing the replacement of private industrial undertakings by State undertakings, *i.e.* by the central authority or by local authorities — has been noteworthy. The most conspicuous example of a State undertaking in England is the post-office. This has been constantly enlarging its functions; and it now undertakes, besides the transmission of letters, the carriage of small parcels, the telegraph business of the country, the banking of small savings, insurances, and limited annuities. The State has also its dockyards, arsenals, and victualing stations, where it builds ships, makes guns, provisions vessels, etc.; it has its Mint, where it fashions the coin of the realm; and it has its galleries and museums, its light-houses, and its coast-guard and pilot services. The State also manages lands and estates, makes land surveys, takes the census, provides weights and measures, controls charities. The number of its employees, excluding the army and navy, is over one hundred and thirty thousand.

More important, however, than these large functions of the central government are the undertakings of the municipalities and other local bodies. Past legislation has provided for a considerable number of these, and they are being constantly added to. Among the more important matters in the hands of local authorities are: education (under the supervision of the central Education Department); the relief of the poor, including management

of large workhouses, the supply of medical attendance during sickness, in accidents, and in childbirth, the apprenticeship of poor youths and young women, the boarding out or placing in families of orphans and deserted children, and the emigration of poor persons; the supply of gas and water; the construction and maintenance of markets, sewage farms, museums, galleries, libraries, parks, public baths and wash-houses, harbors, piers, wharves, bridges, roads, hospitals, lunatic asylums, cemeteries, dispensaries, tramways, ferries, dwellings for artisans, the provision of garden allotments for poor laborers; vaccination; the purchase and sale of lands for street improvements, etc.

Since Socialism is to be chiefly realized through municipal or local organization, and is averse to unnecessary centralization, it seeks by every means to widen the sphere of public enterprise by promoting the extension of the powers of these local bodies. Nevertheless, there are at least two matters which it thinks should be undertaken as soon as possible by the central executive,—the ownership and management of railways and banks. As regards municipal management, there can be little doubt that the obvious advantages of the public supply of gas and water and the provision of baths, wash-houses, and institutions for education and recreation will lead, as Socialists urge that they must lead, to further government undertakings. Socialists have made it a point in their agitation to advocate that the employees in all these public establishments shall be well paid and considerately treated,—paid wages sufficient to insure a respectable maintenance, and allowed reasonable holidays.

The next step in the way of local public enterprise which Socialists would wish to see, and are hoping to see taken soon, is one in connection with that most pressing of English problems,—the problem of the unemployed. Before this problem the politicians stand at present bewildered and helpless. There seems to be no way of dealing with it without interfering, in what they fancy an unwarrantable manner, with vested interests. But, vested interests notwithstanding, the problem must be solved. There are three leading suggestions for dealing with it: first, that of forming pauper or beggar colonies, after the model of those in Holland and Germany; second, the organization of labor in connection with the English workhouses, by which these institutions may be self-supporting,—a remedy advocated by Mr. Arthur Mills, who has propounded a plan in a work entitled "Poverty and the

State"; third, the proposal advocated by Socialists for the organization of agricultural and industrial armies under State control on co-operative principles. Confused and timid as public opinion is at present on this question, it is hardly likely that the evil will be dealt with at once in any thorough-going way, but will for a year or two be met in the partial and unsatisfactory manner at present adopted in some instances,—the opening of stone and labor yards by local authorities to give temporary relief by payment of very low remuneration for rough work (chiefly stone-breaking), which avoids competition with private firms. Meantime, the Socialists will continue to press for the immediate employment of the unwilling idlers upon needful and contemplated public works, public improvements, and especially the erection of artisans' dwellings; and they will continue to agitate for the more satisfactory palliative described above.

Among the Acts recently forced by party exigencies out of the present Conservative government in England was an Allotments Act, which empowers local authorities to purchase land to be let in allotments to certain of the poorer working people. This was a very important concession to the Socialistic principle. It is true that the Act was, as might be expected, very unsatisfactory; but it will no doubt be amended and extended by the next Liberal Government. It is the policy of Socialists to see that every advantage is taken of legislation of this description. The difficulty usually urged as against an extensive acquisition of land by public authorities is the difficulty of raising the purchase money, seeing that taxation already presses so heavily upon the poor. The difficulty is to be met by a readjustment of taxation, which naturally leads me to the third division of my subject.

3. The third kind of legislation for which, as I said, Socialists would work is legislation for the progressive taxation of rent and interest to meet the expenses of government, and the abandonment of all other forms of taxation. This means shifting the burden of taxation entirely on the shoulders of the rich, with the ultimate object of abolishing the class of recipients of rent and interest entirely. Clearly, then, the making of the poor justly rich will imply the now unjustly rich becoming poorer,—poorer, that is, in private possessions, and not in opportunities for noble living. They would have to forego their great luxuries (flunkies, etc.), which, according to the religion that many profess, would give them some hope of heaven; but it is clear that no real good

which the rich now enjoy, no advantage of art, science, music, literature, entertainment, will be lost under Socialism, which would provide the best of these things for the enjoyment of all.

The principle of a graduated income tax has already been conceded in England by the exemption from the income tax of all incomes not exceeding £150 (\$750) per annum, and by the imposition of taxes on personal property, such as death duties. Socialists would be in favor of raising the present limits of income exempted from income tax, of making the tax a graduated one, and of equalizing and increasing the death duties. This has already been proposed by non-Socialists.

At the present moment, the attention of taxation reformers is chiefly turned towards the land. The immense increase in urban rents, and the exorbitant demands made in numberless instances by the ground landlords in London upon the recent renewal of leases, has brought the injustice of the individual appropriation of the unearned increment into full relief. People have begun to see that the rise in rents is due to social causes, and that, as a rule, the landlord has done absolutely nothing to merit the increment. And so we have now a movement, growing daily in strength, for the taxation of ground values. This is supported by Socialists. It is contended that the land tax should be constantly raised, so as in time to absorb the whole of the unearned increment, and eventually all rent whatsoever. Another proposal advanced by other reformers is the special taxation of mineral royalties; and in this, too, as a requirement of the same principle, Socialists concur.

4. I come now to my fourth division of the legislative policy of Socialism,—the promotion of legislation to improve in all possible ways the conditions and opportunities of the poorer citizens. This, I repeat, is not regarded as in any sense charitable relief; and, in taxing the rich for the accomplishment of this end, the poor are simply getting justice. Here, again, Socialism will be developing a species of legislation begun long ago. The obligation of the State to protect the poor against extreme want, and itself from the evils of vagabondage, was recognized long since by the English Poor Law. The further necessity of protecting the poor and the State against the evils of ignorance was later on recognized by the passing of the Education Acts. It is, indeed, now coming to be seen that the condition of the survival of the nation as such in the international commercial struggle calls for the tech-

nical and higher education of the working population ; nay, more than this,—that the good of the nation as a whole, rich and poor, can only be secured by keeping the workers efficient in body and mind. The modern race for commercial supremacy is at last for the best educated ; and a high education cannot be given to an indigent, overworked, underfed population. In the last resort, in fact, selfishness is suicidal. To the Socialist, the better care of the poor is not a mere matter of expediency : it is a matter of justice. For him the argument from national survival has no ultimate validity, since he is in all nations bent, as an essential part of his mission, upon ending the present international struggle and establishing amity and co-operation among the workers of all countries. He does not believe in the beneficence of selfish struggle, but regards it as subhuman, and of no further value for the purpose of realizing a true society. Socialism would entirely replace private philanthropy by State protection ; and it will accordingly work for such an extension of our Poor Law System as will insure the adequate care and comfortable maintenance, without any slur of charitable intention, of the sick and incompetent and aged.

Something has already been done by legislation to provide by public agencies for the needs of the poor as regards bathing, washing, laundry work, education, and recreation. Besides the powers possessed by municipal and other local authorities to erect dwellings for artisans, they possess, and are now more liberally using, powers to construct public baths, wash-houses, and laundries, libraries, galleries, schools, halls, and to provide public parks and recreation grounds (wherein music is often performed and games are furnished at the public expense). With this start made, the way stands open for the speedy extension of public enterprise. Socialists will strive to hasten the time when the poor shall by these co-operative methods be better provided for than the rich ; when the facilities for washing, for cooking, and the other operations of daily life in which co-operation is possible, shall be greater in the public establishments than any private enterprise can possibly provide.

In the matter of education, we have very much more ground to make up in England than you have here in America. We have not yet secured free education, even of the most elementary kind. That is what we are agitating for now, and shall probably get very soon. But this will be only a first step. We shall then have

to agitate for the improvement of the elementary education as at present given, and for free higher education ; that is, for free public secondary and high schools. The ideal of Socialism is that the State (not necessarily the central authority) should supply, free of cost, the very best education that can be given ; and that this education should be continued until every pupil has been fully equipped for that calling for which he or she has been proved to be fitted. In short, we must work not only for free schools, but for free universities. The great obstacle to such progress in England is class distinction. The tendency is to provide separate state schools for rich and poor ; for example, by establishing so-called middle-class schools. That is the tendency we have to fight against ; and, by the introduction of a uniform school system, to deal a blow at the miserable class separation and pride which are the enemies of noble civilization.

As connected with the subject of education, it should be mentioned that an important demand made by advanced Radicals as well as Socialists is one for the provision of a free daily meal for all children attending board schools. At present, as I previously mentioned, many thousands of school children are unable through sheer lack of food to receive even the elementary teaching given in the public schools ; and it is argued that, if education is necessary, then it is necessary that the scholars should be rendered capable of receiving it. That is good logic and good sense.

I have now very briefly sketched the more immediate legislative reforms for which Socialists intend to work as leading towards the full attainment of their ideal ; but it needs to be pointed out that the political machinery, electoral, legislative, and administrative, as it now is in England, is very imperfect, old-fashioned, and quite inadequate to modern needs, so that its improvement is another matter for which Socialists are obliged to agitate. We have nothing like the clear and consistent — though, it would seem, not wholly perfect — system of the United States. We have to “democratize” our political institutions, to simplify and consolidate our electoral methods and districts, to decentralize and unify administrative functions. Hence Socialists include in their programme the following items : adult suffrage ; the abolition of all property qualifications and all privileges in voting and in representation (which includes the abolition of that decorative remnant of feudalism, the House of Lords) ; the payment of election expenses and of salaries to public representatives ; more frequent

Parliaments, probably annual. These reforms are not advocated by Socialists only. They are included in the recognized Liberal and Radical programmes. The same may be said of the proposal to reform the present anomalous and absurd laws for the registration of voters and the areas of electoral districts, than which nothing can be more puzzling and irrational. Lastly there is the reform of local administration. At present, the system is most confused and clumsy, and only an ingenious mind can comprehend it. Local authorities,—county, municipal, union, township, sanitary, highway, lighting, education, etc.,—whose jurisdiction extends over different, overlapping areas, have been multiplied until the adjustment of their powers and duties often perplexes the central adjudicating authority, the Local Government Board. The passage of the Local Government Act, 1888, is the first step towards the introduction of order into this chaos.

It must be borne in mind that these political aims which I have outlined by no means exhaust the practical aims of the Socialist movement. It relies on other forces for the accomplishment of its purpose. I do not speak of its educational work, its propaganda at elections and so forth; while, as for its effort to secure the election of Socialists to Parliament and upon local bodies, that may be held to come under the head of political aims. (Several Socialists have been elected on town councils, school boards, vestries, etc.) The leading principle of their extra-political work is to further any movement that will justly increase the power of labor against capital. Therefore, they are anxious to do all that can be done in the way of strengthening and increasing labor organizations, and in assisting the workers in strikes and disputes. Thus, when the girls employed in the great match factory of Bryant & May struck work last year, the Socialists took the matter up, organized the strikers, moved public opinion in their favor, collected and distributed funds for their support, and succeeded in getting them to unite to form a trades-union. The Socialist to whose untiring and judicious efforts the success of the strike was mainly due, Mrs. Annie Besant, was elected secretary of the union. It was a Socialist who took the directing part in the recent successful strike of gas engineers in London. It is a Socialist, John Burns, who has been the friend and leader of the dock laborers in their present strike. Annie Besant, it may be said, is a member of the London School Board, where she has a Socialist ally in the Rev. Stewart Headlam; and it was owing to her that the

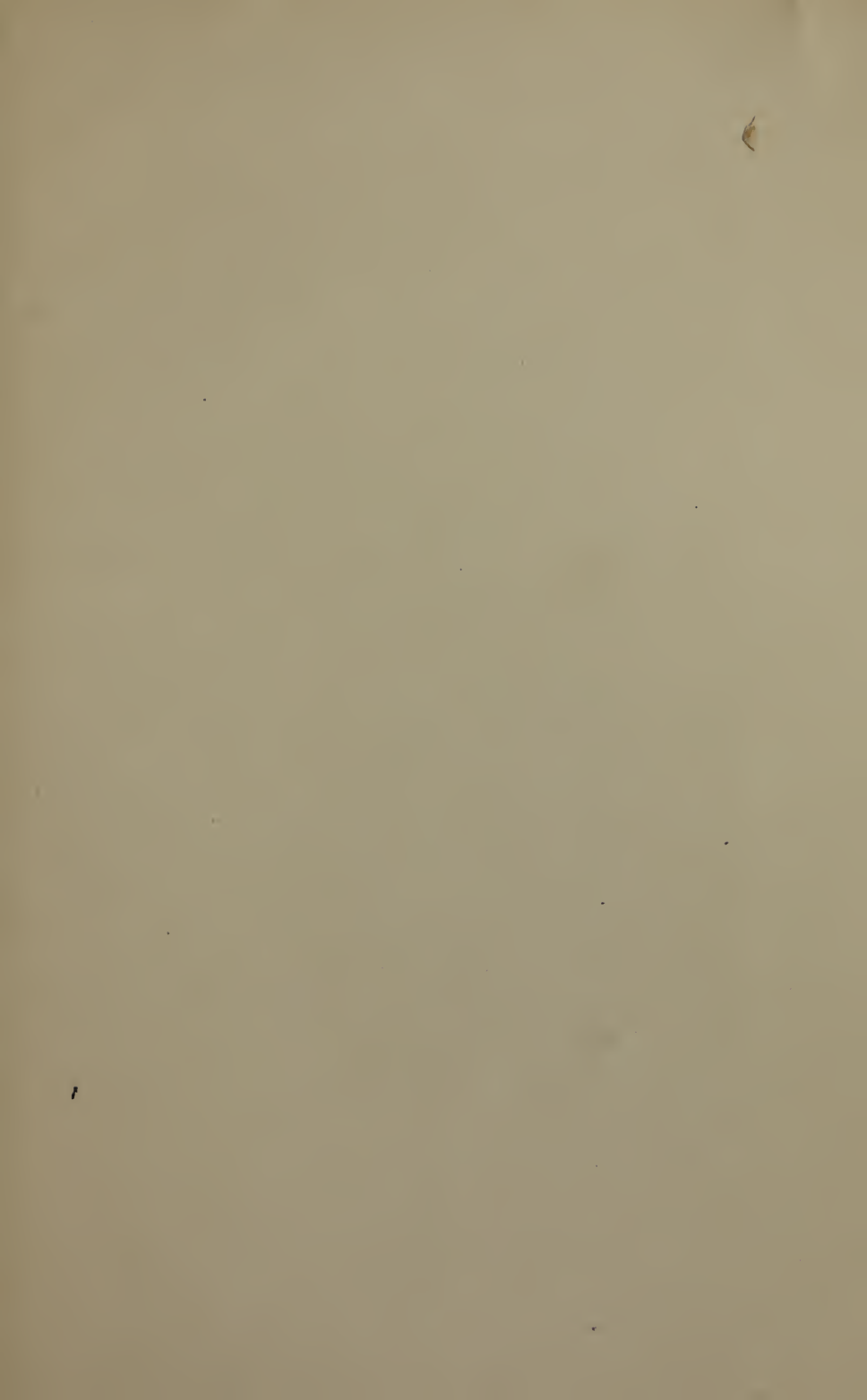
School Board passed a resolution pledging itself in effect not to give contracts to firms who do not pay the trades-union rate of wages. This was an important point gained, and the example of this metropolitan board is almost sure to be followed by other public bodies. John Burns is a member of the London County Council, and he will shortly try to get that authority to make a similar regulation.

The efforts of Socialists to promote the closer union of the workers are not confined to England, but, as the international scope of the movement requires, are directed towards securing an understanding between the workers in all European countries. This work has produced good results, and is fostering a sense of international solidarity, which, as events have actually shown, is leading workmen on the Continent to refuse to replace their English comrades at lower wages.

In conclusion, let me say that Socialism is very much more as a revolutionary force in modern life than these practical aims would seem to imply. It has appeared as a new hope, not only to the needy and baffled wage-worker, but to many a despondent poet, philosopher, artist, and craftsman. And thus it is that the movement has become penetrated by an inspiring sense that it is the herald of a nobler epoch of civilization, the liberator not only of the down-trodden people, but of a corrupted art and literature and religion. On all sides, men and women are coming to see that the diverse evils and deformities of our civilization are closely connected with a fundamental social injustice, and that no fair flowers of life and deed can spring from a society that is rooted in dishonor, in a debasing struggle for riches, and in an estranging inequality. The significance of Socialism lies in the fact that it is at the core the expression of a new view of life; and yet not new in any absolute sense, but new to the average conviction and conscience of the age. At the heart of it lies the belief that we are, with our absorption in "getting and spending," missing the true end of life through a foolish care for the mere means of living. This is but to say again, in the language familiar to Christendom, that human happiness does not consist in the abundance of possessions, and that riches are a real impediment to the higher life.

If there is anything that convicts the modern world of insincerity, it is the appalling discrepancy between its profession and its practice,—the root of much prevailing cynicism and infidelity. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon"; "a rich man shall hardly

enter into the kingdom of heaven"; "lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth,"—reflect what a glaring unfaithfulness to these sayings the commercial and social life of to-day discloses! Socialism would have those who believe in such ideas turn and be faithful to them. As opposed to the present life of struggle for outward riches, it advances the ideal of a life of co-operation for that true wealth which is the enrichment of man's mind and heart with truth and beauty and fellowship,—a life not choked by material encumbrances, but clean and wholesome in its refined simplicity; a life which promotes the development of manly character and the full fruition of human powers for the good and enjoyment of all.



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